

# frontier

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## *Two Insurgencies*

**U**NLIKE ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT INSURGENCY IN NEIGHBOURING Myanmar, Maoist militancy in India continues to suffer one setback after another in recent months. Very recently 14 Maoists or Naxals as they are popularly called in the media, including one of their top ranking leaders were killed in an encounter in Dandakaranya's Mainpur police station area along Chattisgarh and Odisha border. Earlier dozens of naxalites were eliminated by the security forces in Chattisgarh's Bijapur and Union Home Minister Amit Shah vowed to eradicate 'maoist menace' completely in a year. This time forces from the Gariband Operation Group E-30, COBRA 207, CRPF battalions 65 and 211 and the Special Operations Group (SOG) from Odisha's Nuapada succeeded in killing Jayram alias Chalapathi, a central committee member and one of the most wanted insurgents carrying a reward of Rs 1-crore over his head. In his earlier life Chalapathi was Pratap Reddy who after graduation in science from a Chittoor college reportedly served in a government department before joining the Maoist party. Despite tremendous sacrifices the Maoists are not winning; they are losing to security forces equipped with superior weapons and modern war gadgets. Their guns have failed to mobilise masses in their millions without which no revolution can triumph. After all "revolutions are about love". The debate over whether gun is commanding politics or politics is commanding gun has been in the air for quite some time. The persons in power and their ideologues have created an enemy perception in the maoist movement and it is one of the deciding factors in isolating them from the oppressed people who are under the sway of right-wing parties. Tragically enough those who are sacrificing their lives for the downtrodden and most vulnerable sections of society are being dubbed terrorists and enemies of people.

It is not really the case in Myanmar. For Myanmar's people, Year four under military junta rule has only brought more death, displacement and despair, as their troubled homeland is torn further apart by a seemingly intractable civil war. The military, not the guerrilla army, is isolated from the masses. And it is the main strength of the rebels who have a correct Massline to follow.

In capital Naypyidaw, the military—or Tatmadaw in local language—calls all the shots, but after a series of battlefield losses, the generals increasingly find themselves boxed-in to the country's central heartlands. With the world's

attention diverted by the Russia-Ukraine war, the carnage in the Middle East and the return of Donald Trump as one of the most arrogant authoritarian rulers on Earth, Myanmar's on-going resistance struggle by the Bamar People's Liberation Army [BPLA] against the brutal junta, seems to be a forgotten issue. But it has the potential to influence a number of ethnic insurgencies in India's north east, particularly after its success in forcing the military to retreat and creating an atmosphere of dream and hope for the people. In the dense forests of the

Irrawaddy River basin, the BPLA, armed with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, machine guns and M16 rifles seized from Tatmadaw bases, is fighting a decisive battle as the Junta doesn't have effective control over much of Myanmar, ceding between 50 and 70 percent of the country's territory to rebel groups and losing key areas along the borders after suffering serious defeats in Rakhine and Shan states last year.

Despite losing grounds, the Myanmar military still retains key advantages as they are being continually armed with weapons from Rus-

sia, China, North Korea and Israel. Myanmar's civil war has forced millions to flee their homes. Young people are trying to escape mandatory conscription into the army's depleted ranks. Despite hardships people support the BPLA as it is the case for Hamas in Gaza. The scenario in India is completely different. Insurgency, Marxist insurgency to be precise, here never crossed the threshold limit. Here young people are too eager to join the army knowing full well that they would be used as cannon fodders. They would be ordered to kill their own brothers and sisters. □□□

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## COMMENT

### Americans Need a New Party

THE USA REALLY NEEDS A political party which is completely dedicated to evolving and promoting an agenda based on peace, justice and environment protection, internally as well as at world level.

Instead of looking at what people are likely to vote for or support in the short-term, such a political party would be guided completely by the best possible, mutually consistent programme of justice, peace, true democracy, protection of environment and biodiversity, and then devote itself to taking this among as many people as possible, without allowing the most essential components of the programme to be compromised or diluted. This political party must also gradually create groups of academics, journalists, women, students, youth, workers, farmers, minorities etc. committed to supporting and helping this political party in various ways.

It is for people to decide whether an existing alternative party can be prepared and strengthened for such an important role, or whether an altogether new party must be created with contributions from some

of the existing alternative groups and parties. Clearly a communist party cannot provide such an important role in the USA, although it may in some other countries, because for historical reasons people would not be able to link it with an agenda of democracy and environment protection. However the communists, if they choose to, can certainly play an important supportive role in this process.

The new political party should function completely in non-violent and transparent ways. It should also push for reform of the political system to remove several undemocratic and corruptive features and influences.

The new political party should strive to remain outside the influence of the deep state, as without this it is not possible to evolve a true agenda of peace, justice, democracy, environment protection and concern for all forms of life.

Of course evolving and promoting a mutually consistent agenda of peace, justice, democracy, protection of environment and biodiversity is important for all countries of the

world, linked to their local conditions, but perhaps it is most important for the USA which is the most powerful country in the world today, and when such an agenda evolves and is constantly discussed in the USA, then this has an important impact all over the world.

It must be admitted and foreseen that attempting such a hugely important task in the USA, important not just for the USA but also for the entire world, also carries grave risks, as evident from the assassinations of President John Kennedy, Presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Sr and civil rights and peace leader Martin Luther King during the 1960s, but this work is too important to be given up just because of the risks.

There would be several difficulties in the path of such a political party in the USA, and so it may not be in a position of winning elections at various levels for some time, but even without this it can play a very important role by setting an agenda based on what is best from the point of view of mutually consistent objectives based on peace, justice, real democracy, environment protection and concern for all forms of life. □□□

[Contributed by Bharat Dogra]

## NOTE

## Towards a Brown International

**Yorgos Mitralias writes:**

*"It is our moral duty to defend the legacy of our western civilisation. The West is in danger... We must stand together, establishing channels of cooperation throughout the world. We could call ourselves a right-wing international, a network of mutual assistance made up of all those interested in spreading the ideas of freedom around the world"* —Javier Milei

**T**HIS CALL FOR THE founding of a far-right International must be taken very seriously. Firstly, because the man who uttered these words is not just anyone: he is the President of Argentina and the darling of fascists and other right-wing extremists the world over, *Javier Milei*. Then, because among those who applauded them were former Brazilian president *Jair Bolsonaro*, the leader of *Vox* and the Spanish Franquists *Santiago Abascal*, the strategist of international neo-fascism *Steve Bannon*, and above all the co-chair of the *Republican National Committee* and Donald Trump's daughter-in-law *Lara Trump*. And also, because this appeal was launched during the recent meeting in Buenos Aires of the *Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC)*, the very powerful and inescapable organisation of American reactionaries, which is becoming increasingly international and far-right radical. And finally, because eminent figures from the global far right, such as Italy's meta-fascist Prime Minister *Giorgia*

*Meloni* and Hungary's Prime Minister *Victor Orban*, have already spoken out in favour of the creation of such an International.

But that's not all. What makes this appeal even more credible, and therefore even more alarming, is that international big business is now showing increasing interest in, if not support for, Milei and his ideas, which until recently were considered far-fetched and extremist. Take, for example, Britain's *The Economist*, the flagship of the international financial press, which a few days ago had no hesitation in praising Milei and his economic "exploits". So much so, in fact, that the same *Economist* went so far as to advise Trump to forget his protectionism, follow Milei's example and apply during his new presidency the... shock therapies of Argentina's very libertarian president. And to be honest, *Economist's* praise seems to find a following, as Trump's victory means that Milei, until recently a pest, is now gaining favour in the right-wing press of European countries...

However, it's safe to assume that

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this sudden turn by Europe's mainstream media in favour of Milei's policies isn't due to ideological affinity alone. Clearly, it is also due to the fact that, as a good libertarian, Milei advocates total freedom of trade, i.e. a policy diametrically opposed to the aggressive protectionism preached by Trump. This protectionism obviously frightens the European bourgeoisie, all the more so as Trump is multiplying his threats to impose exorbitant tariffs on their products.

However, some difficulties in building a Brown International should not lead people to believe that its creation is doomed to failure. For, even divided, neo-fascists and other right-wing extremists still have the wind in their sails, coordinating, going on the attack and threatening human rights, people's freedoms and lives as never before in 80 years.

□□□

### 'THE IDEA OF JUSTICE'

## It is just that there be Law, but Law is not Justice-II

**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

*[This Keynote lecture was delivered at the History for Peace annual conference titled 'The Idea of Justice' in Calcutta on August 3, 2023]*

**M**ARX KNEW THAT THE difference between good and bad can be perceived through the fact that human beings

make more than they need. State formations made Marxism into a formula—hence, Marx and Engels say in the 1872 Introduction to *The Com-*

*munist Manifesto* that the revolution parts of that text are outdated because, in the last 25 years, between 1848 and 1872, big business has gone, so far that all that has been said in the revolution section has become useless. Therefore, when Marxist ideals are taken to be a unified formula—which is not impossible to do—you get totalitarianism. So, to an extent, it ignores the senses of justice. Mao Zedong tried to do it

by a quick cultural revolution, so justice as cultural practice would be communistic, but of course he could not accomplish it, for it can only be done through a persistent rearrangement of desire of a collective composed of individuals. That would supplement the idea-based inclination to totalitarianism. To supplement is to question the totality of any system by identifying a lacuna which the supplement attempts to fit as exactly as possible, indefinitely.

So it is in imperial-language high schools that the remote consequence of planetary justice begins. The imperative today is to reimagine the possibility of a monstrous future. We are now being played out by greater planetary narratives. Human accountability is way short of trivial. In the context of that, everything is impossible, but as long as we are alive, there's the other necessary part which is: knowing that it is seriously impossible. One of the extraordinary things about 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' by Mahasweta Devi is that she is one of the very few people—there are other literary folks imagining—who distinguish between the fact that although planetary justice will be extinct anyway and is impossible, it is necessary also for us to strive towards it.[4] Nationalism divides and India will not achieve anything by way of exceptionalism—as prophesied by current political figures. Phrases such as 'One World' and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is my family) hold no meaning except as ideas. It is within this context that

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Mahasweta Devi in 'Pterodactyl' distinguishes between the fact that pterodactyl's extinction is due to planetary or global law, rather than cosmic law; at the same time, Puran Sahay must do human things. *The Sea Wall*, a 1950s novel by Marguerite Duras, distinguishes between two kinds of planetary justice: possible; and necessary but impossible.[5]

We have to realise that just a little restraining of our greed is not going to do anything. One has to have the power and force of imagination. When Marx was writing about the possibility of social justice, he spoke of a form, the value-form, which is empty, contentless—*inhaltlos*. This was because you can measure everything by the value form—it is the general possibility of measurement. Workers can combat capitalism if they perceive the sum of private labour in the value-form, that is, labour power. At the same time, he is so moved by the fact that demands such as private labour and private suffering be denied in preparing for this combat, that he writes in Section IV of Chapter 1 of the first volume of *Das Kapital* that one must also forget that everything must become like a single form, or exist in the value form. And the only time that Marx describes the content of revolution and not the form is in 1852, after he witnessed the revolution of 1848. Marx was 30 years old during the 1848 revolution. While he describes the content of the proletarian revolution of the nineteenth century, he says, 'It will take its content from the poetry of the future.' The impossibility of being able to do it now cannot be ignored. Justice as cultural practice: tragedy, farce, dance, poetry.

In one of *Aesop's Fables*, 'The Boasting Traveller', the traveller claimed to have leapt great distances while at Rhodes and that eyewitnesses would bear testimony to this. A listener promptly replied,

'*Hic Rhodus, hic salta*'—this is Rhodes, jump here. This is the example of false promise, a failure. Such promises are impossible to be fulfilled, yet necessary to be made. This is how Marx describes the imperatives of the proletarian revolution in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. This is the idea of justice I put forward: A sense of justice that is divided, refraining from teaching surveys and encouraging intellectual labour. It has to be kept in mind that malpractice/misuse of the idea of justice is the beginning of class prejudice, people taking over the right to help others, and thus subalternise the people below through legalized cheating. This cultural practice divided against itself is not what the idea of justice or the sense of justice stands for.

#### **Question and Answer Session**

**GCS:** Let me just say: this concept of vaadi, samvaadi, going into mother tongue, etc., and calling it decolonization, is the worst among so-called diasporics, so I'm glad you are the first one to ask a question. Carry on.

**Audience Member 1:** I am Subhradeep, a graduate student at Rutgers. My question is: if we understand idea by imagination—I am thinking of the word 'Begriff' when you speak about 'sense'—is there a suggestion that imagination should overpower justice—akin to culture—to the extent that the meaning of justice as culture is turned around from the inside?

**Audience Member 2:** I am Satish. I have been an educator formally for ten years now. I am a visiting faculty at the Department of English at Ashoka University. As an educator, what I repeatedly confront is a sense of despair. So I was wondering if this sense of justice accommodates an empathy for despair as well.

**Audience Member 3:** My name is

Akhila and I am a high-school teacher from Chennai. I teach in an English-medium school and my students mostly come from well-off backgrounds. There is not much disparity; by and large, their backgrounds are uniform. The question I have is: How do I help them and help myself understand the connection between entitlement, one's own capacity and justice, as people who are quite privileged?

**GSC:** There's nothing wrong with English medium. I adore English. You think I would've taught English for so long if I would have never loved it? And when I teach here, among the landless illiterates—the *tapsilis* and *adivasis* (scheduled castes and scheduled tribes)—I teach them to love English by pointing out the immense range of just 26 letters that can create different sounds simply by positioning the vowels differently. You would need to love English in an extra-moral sense. And this, for me, is a way to undermine the fact that English is a class privilege—not by rejecting English because that would be like committing suicide. In today's world, you have to acknowledge that English is a mother tongue and as a language, altogether well elaborated. This is why the English language is learnt and lexicalized by people who don't know English. Tribals would rather say 'harassment' than *nirjaton*, although they understand the English word as little as the elite Bengali. Mahasweta Devi's 'conter'—encounter or death in police custody without charge—is another example of lexicalization. Such lexicalizations are important but so is standard English. It's no use saying that Indian English is another variety of English. English, that has gone

so far in Japan, is the standard English and not Indian English. I respect the presence of local Englishes, but it is important to hang on to standard English. You should invite high school students into thinking this.

Nothing in the high-school classroom should be superficially political. This is an age that is extremely vulnerable and so, the teacher has a responsibility to accept their class privilege as normal and not encourage them to do good to the poor, etc., which would intensify the idea of privilege one way or other.

They can certainly think of English as a wonderful language that unifies, but they should also be able to think that it divides us from the world's wealth of languages as well as languages in India. Perhaps they can have a collective project of making a language map of the world in a broad and general way. And so, if you are doing justice, then the sense of justice will have to come by way of English, actively, not simply as a survey of other people's thinking. But they must also be able to produce a cultural practice of justice through their mother tongue. With the teacher's help, of course, since they have never done such a thing before.

About idea and imagination being thought of together—why do it? Keep the difference alive. We have seen how 'imagination' is different from the unifying force of the 'idea'. And as for the word *Begriff*: yes, it is held by the metaphor of grasping, but we are talking of the discipline of philosophy owning the idea of justice. Whereas the sense of justice leads to cultural practice where to focus on the trivial truth that the word idea is also a metaphor refuses to tangle with the diversified predicament of the practice of justice, marshalled by the law as the instrument of enforcement of the law as conceived by the idea of justice. To

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put idea and imagination together would solve a problem so easily that you wouldn't have to think about the difference. Here, as in most cases, it is the difference that pushes us forward.

Another thing which also addresses the Ashoka University English faculty is that thinkers have thought that extra-moral sense and stasis is good. I mean, nirvana is not life. My friend Maung Zarni, a Burmese person who is against the military situation in Burma and supports the Rohingyas, talked about his father who refused nirvana because, nirvana—not in the Buddhist sense, but as a colloquial idea—although it seems very good, is just stasis. Freud was himself bored by the pleasure principle where one was constantly looking at trauma. He writes that the ego always balances the pleasure and un-pleasure, so that normality can be maintained and we can live. His interest was in the more complex concept of the death drive, normality being just a glitch in the middle of it. Marx, when describing a just society, says that if

everybody was rational, there would not be the need for a revolution or a social contract. When he describes a just, socialist society, he lists seven 'ifs'—*wäre* in German. Although impossible, if all of the listed things happened, then in the end there would be no distinction between community and society—the old anthropological difference that Marx learnt from Lewis Morgan. Now the question is: If the idea that when everybody is rational we would not need a social contract is in reality impossible, why would we want to use this concept for ourselves?

In order to deal with the students' despair, I would have to know the group well. That is the requirement for the uncoercive rearrangement of desire. I would then perhaps focus on groups that are in greater despair and ask for solutions. I am myself very doubtful about the word 'empathy' because one should be aware of the fact that going into another's space in order to share affect is an extremely difficult thing. It cannot be defined by an easy word. Sympathy is good enough, although difficult. Empathy is an American word where this pretence has to remain. That is not my philosophy and I don't particularly like the human being. Therefore, let's take that word away. I don't see why we need to focus on

that word. Despair is itself a big word. Remember: I was saying rearrangement of desires. If one hangs by his own desire to help, etc. . . . if one can in the classroom try and get into the desire pattern. Individuals are different, but they are in your classroom. You can't teach one-on-one tutorials, because most of the countries chose the German education system rather than the British one, in the eighteenth century. So, in that situation, you have to make some kind of a conglomerative desire. One has to turn this despair into some pattern of desire, because despair can be anything, such as a price hike, like people at my village school say. So despair at inflation is very different from the despair of the mortality of human beings or inequality in education. So you have to have different senses.

I sometimes wonder: Who wants to learn history? Most of the youth want to learn legalized cheating or computers. Therefore, for so-called artificial intelligence, they forget the word 'artificial'. It becomes a labour-saving device. But what kind of labour does it intend to save? Intellectual labour. Intellectual labour is not meant to be saved. Rather than empathize with their despair, and turn it into that kind of a formula and simply agree, why not make it a problem for yourself? Of course, you are in a university situation. I remember someone from Ashoka University wanted a man from Hong Kong to talk on elections. The first thing I asked was: What did he understand by democracy? The Hong Kong guy, of course, simply understands that democracy is not China. But the woman from Ashoka University said: if there is a clean election, that is democracy. That's the way to keep the vote banks moving. So therefore, at universities and colleges, there are much more advanced problems—they are already pre-

professionalized. That's why I am so keen on high schools. Because before that they are too young and after . . .

I don't have much faith in just empathizing with despair. I am not a good teacher but a very sincere teacher, and the students who can learn from me can take this harshness and extra-moral madness in their stride, unless it is only Brahminical arrogance, as my recent humiliator seemed to think.

**Audience Member 4:** I am Garima Sharma. I teach middle school. I am an educator from Shiv Nadar, Gurugram. The sense of justice is very fluid and varied, and it differs from one person to another. Even when we interact with children, we find that they have different understandings of justice. Do you think it is necessary to have a sense of uniformity or the same form of justice in a society? And, do you think it is possible?

**GCS:** Yes, of course. What I have been trying to say is that that rational sense of uniformity must be seen as always compromised by phenomenal difference. So the students should be carefully introduced to heterogeneity, as long as they know, by way of careful examples, that the homogenous is also and absolutely necessary. (Modi worshipping at the new Ram temple would be a good social text.) There should be—however few or maybe just one, as Rawls has given us—a formula of fairness. I proposed another one, although not originally mine: Justice as not revenge. There has to be some kind of uniformity. I was using the word *Sinne* which is a German word and locates phenomenal heterogeneity, and the one that makes it to the other side, to uniformity, is *Bedeutung* or signification—meaning, which is in a system, and so you can understand the meaning. But sense is not something you can un-

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derstand perfectly. In fact, you cannot understand the *Bedeutung* either, but let's not go there.

Edmund Husserl, who introduced the sense of perspective that *Sinne* or sense carries, also says that *Sinne* can be understood only in a 'noematic' way. 'Noematic' means the format of someone knowing something. This is why Sartre says, in a less profound sense later, that consciousness is vectored—*visé*—and is always moving/proceeding/advancing towards that knowing structure, rather than being infinitely repeatable by itself. That is why you have to go in all different directions, still remembering the rational unicity of justice.

There is such bad teaching in the rural schools, so different from the way you folks teach in your schools, that one doesn't know what to do. The two teachers at my two schools are from an Adivasi community. One of them has a BA and the other has a high-school diploma. They had no idea what it really meant to say that the world is round. They have some pictures in their books which say it spins like a top, and so they think it goes round and round, fast. When I sat them down some weeks ago and said: Look, now that you are sitting down, what

do you see? The further you see across the fields, it is flat, isn't it? It is so big that you will never see it as round, but it actually it is so. And people on the other side are hanging. We are sitting on top and they are hanging down in outer space. Imagine how big it is. That is uniting, that is uniformity, humanity on the planet, yet we are also different.

Then, I hold a stick, and as the sun moves, I can show them how much the earth has gone round.

Planetary justice, yet heliocentric heterogeneity of time.

From the book, they think it is like a top. I told them that it moves very slowly and with it, we all move. So the young woman with the BA asks if houses and trees and everything move. I said: Yes, they move, and then I told them Galileo's story. And I always choke up when I have him stamp on the earth and say after the recant-enforcers have moved on: *E pur si muove*.

Why they don't fall off, she asked. Imagine how badly taught they are in their undergraduate degree. I said: They don't fall off but move together—just like when I go upstairs, my shoes also go upstairs.

The difference between teaching down there and teaching in your

school is huge. One ought to be able to discuss the structural and multifaceted aspect of education, and its heterogeneity. And that here, planetarity is the uniformity, the extramoral justice that holds us together. □□□

#### Notes

- [1] Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"' in Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson (eds), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3–67. Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence' in Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings eds) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 236–52.
- [2] Francis Bacon, 'Of Revenge' (1625) in *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans*. Available online at: [www.gutenberg.org/files/575/575-h/575-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/575/575-h/575-h.htm) (last accessed on 22 June 2024).
- [3] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- [4] See *Imaginary Maps* (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak trans.) (Calcutta: Thema, 2001).
- [5] Marguerite Duras, *The Sea Wall* [New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985[1952]. Translated from the original French, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950).

[Concluded]

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#### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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## The "Abhaya" Verdict—A Great Sweet Fanny Adams?

Jayanta Bhattacharya

**B**Y NOW, EVERYONE knows about the verdict of "Abhaya" rape, torture and murder case (and the great tide of movement following it and lasting for more than two months across India and the world). Sanjay Roy—a civic volunteer of low income group—has been adjudicated as the single guilty (?) and awarded imprison-

ment until death in prison. Who could be the best culprit other than him—away from power centre, without economic resources and belonging to lower rung of civil society? Though it might remind people about Dhananjay Bhattacharya's hanging in 2004.

Abhaya murder had ignited so much sensation in Bengal in par-

ticular, and across India and the more than 60 big cities across the world in general that the newspaper like the *New York Times* published at least three consecutive articles—"Medic's Killing Fuels Protests and Walkouts in India" (August 15, 2024), "Worked to the Bone, India's Doctors Fear for Their Safety, Too" (Sept. 1, 2024) and "In India, Some Doctors Go on Hunger Strike to Protest Killing of Colleague" (Oct. 17, 2024).

The celebrated medical journal *Lancet* too published a report titled "A crisis of safety: female health-care workers in India need reforms" (Sept. 14, 2024). The report observed,

“The tragic rape and murder of a trainee doctor at the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, has once again highlighted the urgent need to address the safety of female health-care workers in India, particularly in government hospitals. This incident is not isolated, but part of a broader pattern of violence against women in health-care settings that demands immediate attention and action.” It further added, “To address this critical issue, we urge that these actions are taken: first, mandatory CCTV surveillance in all areas of government hospitals, including operating theatres and on-call rooms; second, standardised protocols and comprehensive training for all hospital staff on recognising and responding to violence against women; third, establishing hospital-based crisis centres for women across India, expanding successful models similar to Dilaasa (a hospital based crisis centre, was set up in order to provide the much needed psychosocial support to women reporting domestic violence); fourth, stricter laws and enforcement to prosecute

perpetrators of violence against health-care workers; fifth, improved infrastructure such as secure staff housing, transportation, and well lit hospital premises; sixth, regular safety audits of hospital facilities and anonymous reporting systems for staff to raise concerns; and seventh, increased representation of women in hospital leadership and safety committees.”

Earlier, on August 24, 2024, the *Lancet* published another article titled “Rape and murder of doctor sparks outrage in India” where it was clearly stated that “As many as 25 states have laws covering attacks on doctors but there have been very few convictions ... Nearly half of young doctors experienced violence at work in the past 6 months, with 61.5% reporting violence during night shifts. More than half of the doctors who faced violence said there was no violence prevention policy in their hospitals ... The murder of this young lady is not the first neither it would be the last if corrective measures are not taken.”

#### **Flawed Investigation**

*The Telegraph* (23.01.2025) has published a front page article “R G Kar manual on what not to do”) highlighting the important judgement given by the additional district and sessions judge of Sealdah court (the trial court). It has raised serious questions about the whole investigation process which can be outlined as follows—(1) general diary after the death is grossly flawed (elaborately outlined in the verdict), (2) “Blacœ about mistake” (details have been provided in the *Telegraph* article), (3) “Phone left unattended”, (4) “A lie”—the judge mentioned that an assistant superintendent (non-medical) of RG Kar had informed the parents of the victim that she committed suicide, (5) “Last seen alive” (mentioning conflicting statements), (5) “Cause of death” (the judge clearly mentioned that the death of

the victim was due to the effects of manual strangulation associated with smothering and the manner of death was homicidal), (6) “Time of death”, (7) “Sexual assault” (confirmed regarding insertion into the vagina), (8) “One or more assailants” (according to the judge, from the nature of the injuries, it was apparent that more than one person was involved) (9) “Who committed crime”, (10) “The crime scene” (according to the judgement, the seminar room was not the scene of crime or the place of occurrence), and, finally, (11) “Motive” (the offence committed by him (Sanjay Roy) was not pre-planned).

West Bengal Junior Doctors’ Front (WBJDF) has also pointed the serious fallacies in the investigation process conducted by the CBI. They have charted out 20 points of grave concern and distributed leaflets containing these points amongst the huge crowd gathering outside Sealdah court. Some of the most important questions raised by them are—(1) why the parents were not allowed their daughter’s body instantly and why they were almost detained for three hours? Is it humane? Is it even legal? (2) Why did not the college administration lodge FIR on their behalf? What is the mystery behind it? (3) in the nails of Sanjay Roy no DNA of the victims body has been found, (4) so many persons were seen in the CCTV footage, but no one has been interrogated, (5) why only the swab from the nipples was taken and why not any other important swabs taken? (6) a female’s DNA has been found from the victim’s body raising the serious question about the identity of a mysterious lady and, moreover, why this “puzzling” lady was not identified and interrogated by CBI?

***The Movement is Far Reaching***  
Despite all these lacunae and loopholes in the investigation (most likely

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deliberately) the movement has stirred citizens of West Bengal and a section of so called “elites” hibernating so far. The movement has achieved a number of historical milestones for future generations, sociologists, political analysts, thinking people and so on.

First, the movement was without any political banner and was not under the control of any political party. In that sense the movement was initiated by junior doctors en masse, later the movement has been fully successful to bring in its fold senior doctors of almost all organizations and, especially, common people across the Bengal society.

Second, “Reclaim the Night” movement by women of all walks of society on 14 August 2024 opened up the very important “third space” existing beyond political parties and government/state dominance. Women of all strata of our society had gained their *own voice* beyond patriarchal control.

Third, the way junior doctors have carried forward their arguments has led to an impressive, accomplished, logical, rational, gentlemanly yet quite firm to the core argumentative framework. It may be contrasted with the barbarous, vulgar, obscene, illogical, harsh diatribes used by political parties and leaders, especially holding the rein of power. Moreover, their diatribes are always invariably oriented towards personal attacks, which the WBjDF never did.

Fourth, the movement has completely unearthed and laid bare the so far invisible and indiscernible ghastly nexus of crime, fraudulence, threat culture, deeply corrupted medicine-drug-industry-state complex of the hidden “medical empire” which

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was operating for decades. It has asked the pinnacle of power—“hello, the king, where is your cloth?”

Fifth, they have raised and clinched the issue central referral system and the number vacant beds to be displayed electronically at every hospital—be it medical college hospitals, tertiary centres or secondary centres. They have spoken volubly for people’s health and shouted for a patient-cantered medical system, snatching it out of lackadaisical, inhumane and red-tape dependent bureaucratic power-centred procedures.

#### **Whither the Movement?**

Right now the movement’s outcome is fully dependent on judicial process. But it has possibly unravelled the vicious nexus between CBI, state police, state and central machinery and also, maybe, a miniscule of judicial system. Importantly, Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar, an eminent Tamil lawyer and a member of the Constituent Assembly to frame the Constitution, clearly uttered on 8 November 1948, “judicial legislation, so to speak, to read the necessary limitations, according to [the] idiosyncrasies and prejudices ... of individual judges.” (John Harris, *Liberty: The Indian Story*, 2024, p. 96)

The people of India will certainly be free from such “idiosyncrasies and prejudices”.

Finally, the judicial process is not yet over. CBI is supposed to place supplementary charge sheet(s). Moreover, Abhaya’s family has approached the Supreme Court (with 54 points of various irregularities, inconsistencies and lapses in the CBI charge sheet) for further investigation. The harrowing months have produced angst, agony, torment and tragedy amongst the parents of the murdered and raped daughter as well as among her fellow comrades. Is it too ambitious to expect reflection of all these in the supplementary charge sheet(s)? □□□

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## OF POLITICS AND OPPORTUNISM

## All are Worshippers of Ambedkar!

*Naoroji*

ON DECEMBER 17, IN THE Rajya Sabha, Home Minister Amit Shah mocked the Congress by saying, “Ambedkar! Ambedkar! Ambedkar! Ambedkar! Ambedkar! Ambedkar! Ambedkar!” For some people, this has become a fashion now. It is like chanting God’s name repeatedly; doing so can ensure a place in heaven for up to seven lifetimes (‘Saat Janam Tak’). In protest of this, the opposition parties, particularly the Congress MPs, argued, “Amit Shah has insulted Ambedkar (with the implication of ‘Is Ambedkar some God to be invoked repeatedly?’). Therefore, he must apologise! Amit Shah must resign from his ministerial position! The Prime Minister should remove him from the Cabinet!” Countering Congress’s protests, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs also staged demonstrations.

The arguments and counter arguments by the two parties and their allies unfolded as follows:

**Congress Coalition Argument:** “Ambedkar is the architect of the Constitution! You (BJP) have insulted him. You do not believe in the Constitution at all. Your faith lies entirely in Manu Smriti! Ambedkar burned the Manu Smriti text on December 20, 1927. In the past, in December 1949, your RSS and Hindu Mahasabha members burned effigies of Ambedkar. They condemned the Constitution written by Ambedkar as

being entirely foreign. During your ten years of governance, there have been 30,400 attacks on Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). You are conspiring to dismantle the reservations established by Ambedkar gradually.” These were Congress’s arguments.

**BJP Coalition Argument:**

“Congress defeated Ambedkar in elections twice in the past. You awarded the ‘Bharat Ratna’—the highest civilian honour—to your family members but did not bestow it upon the great intellectual Ambedkar. In 1990, the VP Singh government supported by our party, awarded Ambedkar the Bharat Ratna. During your five years of rule in Karnataka, nearly 9,000 attacks occurred on SCs and STs. In 1940, Ambedkar, writing about Pakistan, criticised Islam, stating, ‘Islam divides people into Muslims and non-Muslims.’ You, for the sake of votes, criticise us as communal and appease Muslims at the expense of Hindus. In 1939, Ambedkar visited an RSS office and observed no caste-based discriminations in its activities, which he praised.”

Thus, both the main political parties accused each other of disrespecting Ambedkar. During debates on English and Hindi television, intellectual advocates from both parties passionately claimed, “It is we who truly uphold Ambedkar’s ideals.” However, both sides struggled to address specific arguments, while some claims were supported with historical evidence.

For example, Congress supporters cited Ambedkar’s conversation with the then RSS leader Guru Golwalkar on September 7, 1949, where Ambedkar allegedly remarked,

“The RSS is like a poisonous tree dreaming of restoring Peshwa rule! I cannot associate with it.” BJP opponents used historical texts to validate these claims.

Meanwhile, BJP advocates could not provide specific dates or documents to back claims like Ambedkar’s supposed praise for the absence of caste discrimination in the RSS. Both parties selectively used arguments and concealed inconvenient facts. For instance, BJP leaders mentioned Ambedkar’s criticism of Islam in his book “Pakistan or the Partition of India” (Vol. 8, Page 358) but ignored his criticisms of Hinduism in the same book. Congress leaders highlighted this inconsistency.

Ambedkar’s alleged statement: “Hinduism is inherently opposed to freedom, equality, and fraternity. In that sense, it is incompatible with democracy” is often cited by BJP opponents.

**Both Parties’ Claims on Ambedkar’s Worship**

There are varied opinions on the reverence shown toward Ambedkar by these two coalitions. Many intellectuals argue that neither party truly upholds Ambedkar’s principles. Instead, both engage in political opportunism. Given Ambedkar’s status as a revered figure among Dalit voters, both parties compete to claim him as their own to secure Dalit votes.

This raises an important question: If two rival political parties are vying to claim the same individual as “ours,” what does that imply? It suggests that some aspect of Ambedkar’s ideology resonates with both parties or serves their political needs.

For example, consider Congress. In June 1945, Ambedkar wrote a scathing critique titled “What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables.” Despite his harsh criticism, within two years, upon Gandhi’s suggestion and Nehru’s

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invitation, Ambedkar set aside his disagreements and joined the Congress government as the Minister of Law. Within weeks, he became the Chairman of the Committee tasked with drafting the new Constitution. On November 25, 1949, Ambedkar praised Congress: "The work of this Constitution proceeded in an orderly and disciplined manner because of the Congress party's presence in the Constituent Assembly. The discipline of the Congress party ensured that the Drafting Committee could present this Constitution without any obstacles. Therefore, the credit for the seamless drafting of the Constitution belongs to the Congress party."

Despite these accolades, Congress failed to explain why they did not award Ambedkar the Bharat

Ratna during their tenure.

### **Why Does the BJP Admire Ambedkar?**

Despite Ambedkar's severe criticisms of Hinduism and his conversion to Buddhism, the BJP reveres him for breaking ties with Congress after four years of association. Both parties swear by the Constitution, which was primarily designed to safeguard the interests of the wealthy classes. Since these political parties represent those wealthy classes, they praise Ambedkar for his role in drafting the Constitution, even superficially.

Ambedkar, who rose from an oppressed caste background to become a towering intellectual, remains a symbol of inspiration in a hierarchical society. Throughout his life,

he fought for the rights of the oppressed. Historically, ruling classes often attempt to co-opt reformers from oppressed groups, offering them high status and recognition. This creates illusions among the oppressed masses, ensuring smoother governance for the rulers.

This is why political parties compete to praise Ambedkar—not for his anti-caste ideology but for his role in drafting a Constitution that serves the ruling classes. Marx observed in "Capital": "The more a ruling class can assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule". □□□

(Telugu original appeared in *Andhra Jyothy* daily, dated 26-12-2024)

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'1 ACCUSE'

## A Journey to Nowhere

**Madhu Bhaduri**

*[Madhu Bhaduri, a former Indian Foreign Service officer, joined the Aam Aadmi Party as the founding member. But she was disillusioned with its corruption, lack of transparency & racist attitudes. Mrs Bhaduri presents a first person account of AAP's undemocratic functioning.]*

**M**Y SHORT ASSOCIATION with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was a bit of a misadventure. It seemed all right at that time to move, almost drift, from a social movement into a political one. In fact, the transition from a civil rights movement into a political party was a big jump. In retrospect, my association with AAP turned out to be a journey to nowhere.

The Right to Information (RTI) movement had, over time, turned into a large public outcry against corruption in government. In 2011, at Arvind's initiative, Anna Hazare came to Delhi to lead the fight against corruption. The target of this movement was the ruling Congress Party. Silently, almost clandestinely, the opposition BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) succeeded in including some

of its front cultural organisations as participants in the movement.

A representative of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's 'Art of Living' foundation became a permanent feature of the leading group around Anna Hazare. In a misguided move, the government arrested Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal on the day that Anna was to begin his indefinite fast to press the government to legislate a Lokpal Bill (an ombudsman to look into complaints against the government). The arrest brought the entire media and public focus together on the issue of Lokpal.

Activists like Medha Patkar (of the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan') and Rajendra Singh (also known as 'Water Gandhi' for having revived dry water bodies and rivers) joined the call for a Lokpal Bill. With each

passing day, as septuagenarian Anna became weaker while fasting in public view, support for the movement swelled among the public and the media, with several film stars arriving in Delhi to show their solidarity. Finally, the government succumbed and agreed to talks with Anna and his team on drafting a Lokpal Bill. The chief organiser of the massive Lokpal agitation was Arvind.

Along with Anna Hazare, he became a prominent public figure. On the strength of this success, he decided to form a political party. Anna Hazare was not willing to move from activism to politics. The Right-wing BJP, which had supported the anti-corruption and Lokpal Bill movement, was very much against the formation of what emerged as the Aam Aadmi Party, and put up a resistance to it. However, Arvind Kejriwal and his close associates, Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav, wanted to strike while the iron was hot. They swiftly moved towards the creation of this new political party on the high tide of success of the anti-corruption Lokpal movement.

Why did I decide to become a founding member of AAP and why was I disillusioned by it just as the party moved towards unprecedented success—won elections and set up a government in Delhi?

It is an undisputed fact that corruption has its roots in the funding of political parties. Money that is given to them is unaccounted for (it is largely this money which has illegally avoided the tax net) and is called black money. The AAP came up promising transparency in political funding. It said that donations to the party would be accepted only through cheque payments, and that the party would display on its website every donation that it received, along with the name of the donor.

Like the RTI, this appeared to be a step in the right direction. If political party funding was to become transparent, the power of money in policy-making would also become transparent. No political party before AAP had proposed transparency in fund-raising. It was a 'first time' promise. It stirred my enthusiasm sufficiently for me to join AAP at its formation stage.

The AAP also promised in its Vision Document that tickets to contest elections would be given to candidates chosen by its grassroots workers/volunteers. These two promises were to distinguish it from all other political parties. A third element that it advertised was that it would abandon the VIP culture. It promised that elected leaders of AAP would live modestly.

In the very first elections it contested for the Delhi Assembly, AAP gave tickets to rejected candidates of the Congress and the BJP, who came

with money for their campaigns and also for the party. In some cases, it did so after forcing candidates who had already been fielded with the support of the party's volunteers to withdraw their candidatures in favour of the newcomers.

I was dismayed to hear that one of the dedicated AAP members whom I knew from the RTI days had been forced to withdraw her candidature for a newcomer who had been rejected by the Congress party. When I asked Yogendra Yadav about this contradiction with the Vision Document which he had drafted, he politely told me that Arvind was the 'flagship' of the party; therefore, we should not dispute party tickets given at his discretion.

Once it was formed, the party did not call any meeting to discuss political or social issues. Arvind asked me to write a policy paper on issues of foreign policy for the party's election manifesto. I told him that since I did not know the policies of the party, I was not in a position to write about them; he replied that the party would stand by my personal views, whatever they were. This was not a joke. He actually meant it! The same was repeated on the issue of gender justice.

I remember that in the first and only meeting that I attended on writing the party's manifesto, which was headed by Yogendra Yadav. Yadav told me, in response to my question about what the party's ideology was, that it was to tackle every issue and problem, as and when we confront it. In short, it stood for no principles other than the principle of convenience or opportunism. Can a political party do without an ideology, and survive on nothing more than a call for fighting corruption?

As elections approached, tickets were distributed on the principle of convenience, which included how

much money a candidate would bring. During election campaigns, khap panchayat chiefs who were known for having ordered the honour killings of young couples were invited to address the party's rallies in Haryana.

Anyone who objected to this was told that khap panchayats have culturally strong roots, and are important and traditional organisations that should be given due respect. It is no secret that upper castes, money, and muscle power are in control of khap panchayats. None of these issues—caste, money, and muscle power—was ever discussed among party members. There was no need for discussion. All decisions emanated from the undisputed leader of the party.

When Arvind took oath as Chief Minister of Delhi in front of a sea of supporters, he sang, impromptu, a Hindi film song on 'fraternal feelings or brotherhood' (bhaichara, in Hindi), and seemed to win the hearts of the vast audience before him. He would also ask his audiences to take an oath to neither pay bribes nor accept them.

Corruption, to Arvind, meant the illegal transfer of notes from one hand to another. The question of corruption in policy-making was never raised; it was not even considered corruption. Insiders like myself found out only too soon that the party that was architected to fight corruption was diverging from that vital objective. AAP did not allow RTI to cover it. It still refuses to do so.

The question arises: Can a political party survive only on an anti-corruption plank? If anything, AAP is proof of this inadequacy. The promises to abandon VIP culture also seemed to vanish as soon as the Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues moved into their official residences.

Just a fortnight after the first AAP government was formed, on

For **Frontier Contact**

**DHYANBINDU**

COLLEGE SQUARE

the intervening night of 15–16 January 2014, Somnath Bharti, a minister in the Kejriwal government, along with a mob of supporters, raided the homes of Ugandan and Nigerian women living in Khirki Extension, a part of his constituency in South Delhi, in the dead of night.

The raid was conducted on the mere suspicion that the women were drug addicts and prostitutes. The young women were allegedly beaten, molested, dragged out, humiliated, and forcibly taken to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), where they were subjected to narcotic tests. All of this was captured, including the objections raised by police officers who were called to the location of the raids, on video cameras by the minister's cronies to be publically displayed as the party's achievement.

The drug tests showed that the women victims of the raid had not taken narcotic drugs. The minister's actions in raiding, humiliating, and forcibly subjecting the women to undergo tests were illegal, and the police officers present had objected to them. The entire late-night drama, where the Aam Aadmi Party's minister and supporters had acted as vigilantes, clearly showed up their racism.

Where was the question of 'fraternity and brotherhood' for African women? They were helpless, few in number, and were not eligible to vote in elections. They were at the mercy of the vigilante workers of the AAP, which was running the government in Delhi. My criticism of this in the media and within the party elicited no response from the AAP leadership. I wanted to raise the issue in the first general body meeting of the party, which was held just fifteen days later, and proposed that a resolution should be passed, with the consent of the members, offering an apology to the African women who had been humiliated. It should also confirm that AAP was not a racist party. I circulated a draft resolution well in advance of the meeting.

At the meeting, I had hardly spoken three sentences on the subject when Yogendra Yadav, who was presiding over the meeting, snatched the microphone from me and warned me to not 'make a spectacle before the media'. There was no media present. I was heckled and physically forced by party goons to step down and make myself scarce.

All this transpired before 250–300 party members, including Admiral (Retired) Ramdas, who was

the Lokpal of the party, its moral guardian. Not a single voice of dissent was allowed to be raised.

Absolute loyalty to the party and its leadership was mandatory. That I was allowed to speak even a few sentences was because Admiral Ramdas had firmly stated that he would give his concluding address only after I was given a chance to speak. He had approved of the text of the resolution I had circulated in advance and intended to propose at the meeting. It was clear not only to me, but also to all the disciplined and loyal members of the party who were present that I was in the wrong place and in the wrong party. Interestingly, I received many telephone calls from party members who were witness to the drama and who voiced their solidarity with me. Some of them, including Admiral Ramdas and his wife, even took the trouble to visit me the next day.

Amit (my husband) had told me right in the beginning that he did not think my association with the party would last longer than a year at most. As it turned out, that journey to nowhere, which is how I can describe my association with AAP, was indeed very short-lived. □□□

[Courtesy: Madras Courier]

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## 'EMERGENCY'

### Trivialising Indian History

Ajoy Bose

THE MUCH-PUBLICISED controversy around Bollywood actor and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Kangana Ranaut's new film—*Emergency*—appears quite misplaced.

The film is neither outright party propaganda nor an attempt to denigrate former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Instead, the film, which faced multiple delays, including due to troubles with the censor board, turned

out to be a less than a mediocre film. Full of historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations, *Emergency* is at best a ludicrous bid to trivialise Indian history.

The name of the film 'Emergency' itself is quite inappropriate considering it deals almost in passing with this historic turning point of India's democracy. Ranaut's effort is far more geared towards a biopic—albeit a crude caricature of the life and times of Indira Gandhi from her

days as a little girl in Anand Bhavan to her brutal assassination by her Sikh bodyguards.

Needless to say, she makes a hash of both providing insights into the Emergency and a portrait of Independent India's most remarkable leader.

There is little effort to portray—let alone analyse—the reign of terror unleashed in Delhi and other parts of the country by Indira's younger son Sanjay Gandhi and his coterie who took advantage of a supine judiciary, puppet bureaucracy, and a muzzled media.

While the usual high-tech Bollywood melodrama is used to hype

up the overnight arrest of thousands of political leaders, activists, and even some journalists during the Emergency, palpable mistakes such as confusing media doyen Nikhil Chakravarty with investigative journalist Kuldip Nayar, who was among those arrested, further erodes the credibility of the film.

The two major Emergency excesses—forcible sterilisations and arbitrary demolition of slums to implement Sanjay Gandhi's infamous 5-Point Programme—are treated in the most cursory manner, failing to bring home the horrors of the doctors' scalpel wielded on the manhood of captive male citizens of all ages in makeshift sterilisation camps and bulldozers brutally smashing through homes and displacing thousands of families.

Also Read. Take, for example, the depiction of the Turkman Gate massacre.

The demolitions in and around the large Muslim ghetto close to the historic Jama Masjid is considered as the single most heinous atrocity of the Emergency (and is the highlight of my book), but it is dealt superficially and is full of mistakes.

Public anger in the area exploded when demolitions of slums at Turkman Gate coincided with the setting up of a sterilisation camp by Sanjay Gandhi crony Rukshana Sultana at Dujana House, located opposite Jama Masjid. Both the controversial campaigns were in full swing.

However, the film gives the impression that sterilisations were triggered by the demolitions—and there is no mention whatsoever about the administration adopting ham-handed

methods to achieve unrealistic targets that brought so much misery to hapless citizens.

Needless to mention, the BJP politician-director conveniently ignores the overtly anti-Muslim bias of the administration—and the politicians goading the brutal massacre.

There is also a complete absence of the political background leading to the declaration of Emergency.

The total revolution campaign by Jayaprakash Narayan in Gujarat and Bihar, leading to a brash call by him at a rally in the national capital to the armed forces and police not to obey orders and to citizens not to pay tax, is hurried through.

The assassination of railway minister Lalit Narayan Mishra a few months before the declaration of Emergency and Indira Gandhi's fear of the Central Intelligence Agency destabilising her rule aren't considered important.

Merely a few seconds are devoted to the astute lawyer-turned-politician Siddhartha Shankar Ray, a close friend and advisor of Indira Gandhi, who actually showed her how to use the Constitutional provision of internal Emergency to crush the Opposition and cling on to power.

Instead, the beleaguered prime minister—after failing to get a *carte blanche* from the Supreme Court to protect her from an adverse judgement in an electoral malpractice case from a lower court—is shown to suddenly become a puppet in the hands of Sanjay Gandhi.

Distorting history yet again, Sanjay is seen to singlehandedly impose the Emergency against the wishes of his mother's Cabinet, led by of all people

the then defence minister Jagjivan Ram, although the crafty but timid Dalit party veteran never at that point showed his opposition to the draconian decision to suspend democracy.

As for the other parts of the biopic—barring the brief interlude on the Emergency—the historical basis is equally dubious and the outright mistakes, distortions, and misrepresentations too many to recount.

Sadly, an ambitious venture to make a film on such a complex figure as Indira Gandhi falls short of doing any justice. Although there is a calculated effort to balance the bright and the dark side of her formidable personality, it is just a cardboard figure at best.

Unlike his mother, Sanjay is projected almost like a comic book villain. He is even blamed for plotting the rise of Sikh extremist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale in the 1980s even though the young political heir died shortly after his mother stormed back to power in January 1980. What is also deliberately ignored is his leading role in the disintegration of the Janata Party government—and the collapse of the breakaway Charan Singh-led faction that briefly ruled before the mid-term polls.

It is sad to note that even when Bollywood turns to the neglected political scenario of the past several decades, it reduces the rough and tumble of Indian politics—that provides so much colour and nuances—into a simplistic farce. □□□

[The writer is a Delhi-based senior journalist and the author of 'Behenji: A Political Biography of Mayawati'. He wrote 'For Reasons of State: Delhi under Emergency' co-authored with John Dayal published by ESS Publishers, 1977, republished by Orient Paperbacks Vision Books, 1977, and republished by Penguin Random House, 2018.] [Source: *The Quint*]

## LETTERS

### A 'Frankenstein Monster'

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said during his address at an annual gathering of global elites on January 22 that the world's addiction to fossil fuels has become an all-consuming "Frankenstein monster" imperiling hopes of a

livable future.

"All around us, we see clear signs that the monster has become master. We just endured the hottest year and the hottest decade in history", Guterres said to the audience gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

"A number of financial institutions and industries are backtracking on climate commitments", Guterres continued. "Here at Davos, I want to say loudly and clearly: It is short-sighted. And paradoxically, it is selfish and also self-defeating. You are on the wrong side of history. You are on the wrong side of science. And you are on the wrong side of consum-

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ers who are looking for more sustainability, not less. This warning certainly also applies to the fossil fuel industry and advertising, lobbying, and PR companies who are aiding, abetting, and green-washing”.

“Global heating is racing forward—we cannot afford to move backward”, he added.

Guterres’ remarks came as President Donald Trump, a fervent ally of the fossil fuel industry, took office in the US—the largest historical emitter—and moved immediately to expand oil and gas production, which was already at record levels.

The US is among a number of rich nations working to build out fossil fuel infrastructure and ramp up production in the face of runaway warming and worsening climate destruction across the globe.

“It is more than obvious that the super-rich must pay their fair share”, Clara Thompson, a Greenpeace spokesperson in Davos, said earlier this week. “Especially when they are among the largest contributors to the climate crisis”.

“It shouldn’t be the people, already struggling to make ends meet, who have to foot the bill and suffer the consequences of worsening climate impacts”, “The scarcity narrative is simply not true—there is enough money to fund a just and green future for all but it is just in the wrong pockets.

**Jake Johnson,  
Common Dreams**

### **Justice for All Workers**

The All-India Shramik Samman Yatra is an effort to reach out to over 90% of informal workers across India to advocate with national and state governments for their right to a safe and dignified life. The initiative is led by the Workers People Coalition, a network of diverse organizations across 14 states in India focused on mobilizing legal and mediation support and making policy suggestions to improve the quality of life of informal workers.

The Yatra will pass through 12 states, mobilising workers from differ-

ent sectors such as street vendors, construction workers, domestic helpers, gig and platform workers, agricultural and MGNREGA labourers, fisher folk, sex and bar workers, head loaders, waste pickers, rickshaw pullers, transport workers among others, and their organizations to unite, demand, and present proposals to governments at both state and national levels. It will culminate in Delhi, where the demands and actionable proposals and solutions will be presented to national leaders to secure justice, security, and dignity for all workers.

The Shramik Samman Yatra aims to engage directly with informal workers and their organisations to understand their struggles and aspirations through active dialogue, propagating just policies with the government, and uniting trade unions, policymakers, civil society, and businesses to plan comprehensive solutions for issues affecting informal workers.

The Shramik Samman Yatra is divided into two routes and will mobilize workers, spread awareness, and culminate in Delhi with the presentation of demands to national leaders.

The All-India Shramik Samman Yatra invites unions, civil society organizations, the media, and the public to participate in this transformative journey of change.

#### **Workers People Coalition**

[For more information, to support,

Or to join the Yatra

Phone Numbers: 9654080151, 7838114101  
info@workingpeoplescoalition.org.in]

### **Trump Returns**

Donald Trump’s inaugural speech on January 20 was nothing less than spine-chilling. Or should one say blood curdling?

He promised to send “millions and millions” back to their countries—this day onwards.

He flagged January 20th 2025 as the Day of Liberation for America.

He renamed Gulf of Mexico as Gulf of America. He promised to take back Panama Canal. (No, in an act of small mercy, he refrained from mentioning Greenland and Canada.)

He emblazoned his motto as “drill, drill and drill!” He is pretty brazen as regards his intentions to devastate earth’s ecology and make the planet utterly unlivable for the human species, and so many others. Of course, he doesn’t acknowledge that inevitable prospect.

All social policies meant to help the weak would right now be deposited in the trash bin. Only two genders: men and women.

In the realm of foreign relations: America First (America Second and America Last)! Not a word as regards friends and allies.

Evidently, a veritable nightmare awaits us.

### **Socialist Party (India) Last Christmas in Gaza?**

As Israel’s genocide in Gaza rolls on, the territory’s tiny Christian community is threatened as never before. Though small, they have become symbols of resilience because most have chosen to stay in their historic churches, the Greek Orthodox Saint Porphyrius Church and the Latin Catholic Holy Family Church, in the north, despite Israel’s campaign of extermination there. Israel’s genocidal violence has not spared other Christian institutions. Schools, cultural centres and health facilities—including al-Ahli (Orthodox) hospital, the YMCA, the Orthodox Cultural Center and the Rosary Sisters School—have all been reduced to rubble. Saint Porphyrius Church, one of the oldest in the world, was bombed on 19 October. Eighteen people were killed in the attack, mostly women and children. Among the victims was almost the entire family of Ramez al-Souri, including his three children, A whole family erased from existence. What kind of world allows this to happen? Yet despite their suffering, Gaza’s Christians refuse to lose hope. They continue to gather for prayers, light small candles in their makeshift shelters and cling to fragments of their traditions.

**Fedaa al-Qedra,  
The Electronic Intifada,  
7 January 2025**



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